

Session 13-08 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Sarno at 6:12 p.m. on September 10, 2013 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER BARTH, ROSS, SARNO, WAGNER

ABSENT: KRISINTU

STAFF: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR KOESTER  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda was approved by consensus.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

None

### **RECONSIDERATION**

There was no reconsideration scheduled.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. July 9, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes

BARTH/WAGNER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

### **VISITORS**

A. Jim Lavrakas, Homer Chamber of Commerce, Update on RV Parking

Mr. Lavrakas said that it went smoothly and there were no problems. There was regular use of the parking at the Chamber in the designated area and it allowed people to comfortably walk through Old Town. He recommended they continue to offer the day use parking for the RV's. The Chamber intends to promote it in their Visitor Guide and on their website, to help get the word out there. He estimated about a half a dozen RV's parked there each week. He didn't have any information about the use at the HERC building parking lot.

Commissioner Wagner suggested an informational sign at the Baycrest pull out area that will let people know it is available when they come into town.

There was brief discussion about revisiting the high school parking lot as a location for next summer. Mr. Lavrakas said he will be contacting business owners to see if they are interested in offering their parking areas in the future.

**B. Todd Cook, City of Homer Water/Wastewater Superintendent- Report on Sewer and Water Treatment Facilities for the City of Homer**

Mr. Cook gave the Commission an overview of the activities at the wastewater treatment plant this summer, explaining why the odor coming from the plant was more noticeable than in years past. He explained the issues, starting with the efficiency efforts made last year that caused some unintended results with the oxygenating process, a form of odor control, of the wastewater ponds. That, along with the warm summer, brought together several things that worked against the wastewater treatment staff. They worked together to try to find the best way to resolve the issue properly so as not to create more problems, and have an effective solution. There are aerators in place now that can be turned on if there is an odor issue again in the spring. They have a plan in place to work on getting the oxygen layer built up under the ice, before it melts which will also promote quicker algae growth.

There was brief discussion about public education about what people do and don't dump down their toilets and drains. Mr. Cook said that is always beneficial. The wastewater treatment process is very sensitive to chemicals and petroleum products; those kinds of things can wreak havoc on the system.

**STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS**

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester talked to the group about the City's meeting with the Coast Guard Commandant. The group briefly discussed the need for Coast Guard Housing. Mrs. Koester referenced a study that outlined the inadequacy of housing in the Homer area, per Coast Guard standards. Housing is a huge issue and the local Coast Guard housing office said that they don't necessarily want to live in a complex together; they prefer to be in homes and apartments as part of the community. There is a huge need there and part of it may be connecting the right people.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

A. EDC Bylaw Review and Amendment to Include the Chamber Director as a Non -Voting Member

WAGNER/ROSS MOVED TO FORWARD THE BYLAW AMENDMENT TO COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. City Council Sign Up for September 23 and October 14

Commissioner Barth agreed to attend on September 23<sup>rd</sup> to address the bylaw amendment that will be on Council's agenda.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- A. Memo to City Manager on Assigning the Community and Economic Development Coordinator to the Homer Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
  
- B. Homer Google eCity Designation

The Commission discussed the Google eCity designation, different aspects of web usage for businesses, and entrepreneurial networking. Mr. Lavrakas commented that he included it on the Chambers web page and explained that the award is based on how businesses in our community use AdWords for marketing. The Commission would like to have it on a future agenda to consider ways to leverage it for the city. They felt it would be interesting to understand how this comes about, and how Homer can continue to earn the designation.

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

Bumppo Bremmicker, city resident, commented about an article in the paper a few weeks back about the economy of Homer. He found it interesting that the wages in Homer were about 20% lower than the State average and cost of living was about 20% higher. He started looking around Homer and thought if that was the case, we would be in the dumps here, but there are a lot of things going on. There is building happening, jobs, lots of activity, and the town looks pretty darned good to him. He realized that in the article they didn't include wages earned outside of Homer in their analysis, but there is a lot of that with fishermen who live in here and work throughout the State, non-profits bringing in money from other places, construction jobs, slope jobs, and so on. There is a lot of money that comes into Homer that isn't generated here. It made him think about why are people working jobs all over and live here. It's because Homer is such a nice place to live. It's beautiful, has good fishing, decent climate, and there is lots to do summer and winter. People love to live in Homer. It is important for the City of Homer and the EDC to really understand that this is an important part of our economy. These things that all the different groups do are critical to the economic health of Homer. He encouraged them not to necessarily spend money on non-profits and different things like this because we have to be careful with the taxpayers money, but do what they can to encourage these things and entrepreneurs, and do what is necessary to help and benefit these groups, because this is important to the economy of Homer.

### **COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Sarno recalled the recent murder of the nice man at the Poopdeck Trail, and noted that the police mentioned that is a troubled area of town because there wasn't enough presence in the area. She wondered if they might want to talk about mixed use zones as a deterrent to crime, especially since we are looking at the city center possibly being a mixed use zone, with residential and commercial. Another controversial subject is the topic of profit business and non-profit business, and comparing how they work together, and if there's some kind of competition or something that dovetails. That is another subject they could be studying.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Ross said he is interested in attending a tour of the water and waste water facilities. He had the opportunity to visit the facilities in Anchorage when he worked up there and it is interesting and informational.

Commissioner Barth suggested an idea to explore something they can do to encourage new business or formation of something like a best business contest. It would be interesting to talk about some ideas for that.

Commissioner Wagner said he is proud of the Google e-award, it's a cool thing. He started his online business in 1992. He started a business this last year making pizza's at the Farmer's Market and it is interesting being in the local commerce, going through the permitting, and the amount of fees to get established is amazing as a mobile vendor.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 9, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

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MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_